PROPERTY
—OF—
WESTMOUNT
LIBRARY

[*January 25th, 1915.*]

CANADA'S PLACE IN THE WAR AND AFTERWARDS.

By SIR CLIFFORD SIFTON.

I TOLD your President that my remarks would relate to Canada's place in the war and afterwards. I shall speak of the afterwards first, and if it be suggested that there is anything incongruous in speaking of quite ordinary matters of business at the same time or in the same address as I speak of the great issues of peace and war, of life and death, then all I have to say is this, that such is the way of life. Even in the midst of the greatest tragedies, while we are trying to do our duty in the greatest crises of life, we still must speak, act, and think and do in reference to the ordinary affairs of life, and the better we think and act and do in regard to these affairs, the better we shall act in these crises and the better we shall discharge our duty.

A word or two, in the first place, as to the effect upon Canada's nationality of the action which we have lately taken. Bound by no constitution, bound by no rule or law, equity or obligation, Canada has decided as a nation to make war. We have levied an army; we have sent the greatest army to England that has ever crossed the Atlantic, to take part in the battles of England. We have placed ourselves in opposition to great world powers. We are now training and equipping an army greater than the combined forces of Wellington and Napoleon at the Battle of Waterloo, and so I say to you that Canada must stand now as a nation. It will no longer do for Canada to play the part of a minor. It will no longer do for Canadians to say that they are not fully and absolutely able to transact their own business. We shall not be allowed to do this any longer by the nations of the world. We shall not be allowed to put ourselves in the position of a minor. The nations

F5012
1915
S573

THE CANADIAN CLUB OF MONTREAL

will say, if you can levy armies to make war you can attend to your own business, and we will not be referred to the head of the Empire, we want you to answer our questions directly.

There are many questions which we shall have to settle after this war is over, and that is one of them.

Sir Robert Borden not long ago suggested the idea, and he expressed himself without much qualification, that in the future if Canada was to retain its present implied obligations and present relationships, something would have to be done to give Canada a voice in the foreign policy of the Empire. I believe, also, that Mr. Doherty, Minister of Justice, expressed the same opinion recently in the course of an address at Toronto. The Prime Minister of Great Britain, Mr. Asquith, the first administrator of the Empire, has categorically stated that any such thing is impossible. Mr. Asquith has stated that any arrangement whereby the Dominions shall exercise a voice in the settlement of the foreign policy of the Empire is totally and entirely out of the question. But Mr. Asquith is a statesman and Imperialist of the Liberal school. Turning to another authority, Sir Frederick Pollock, one of the greatest jurists of the Empire, what do we find? Sir Frederick started out by being a strong advocate of an Imperial Council. He travelled all through the British Empire and went back to England and expressed there the opinion that representation of the Dominions in the Imperial Parliament or Government, or in any Council which would have to do with the control of the foreign policy of the Empire, was impracticable. Now, gentlemen, I express no opinion. I simply put to you a question of great importance, a far-reaching question which must be settled at some future date. There are some other questions which must be settled. Here in Canada we have a constitution that was drawn up by men of wisdom a good many years ago, somewhere about the year 1866 or 67, and we have come to regard it, most of us, as a monument of wisdom. Well, it is a monument to the wisdom of the men who drew it up; but no man could ever construct, no man can construct a document that will so stand the test of time as to apply to all the changing conditions that must take place in a country—a new country such as ours. Things have reached the stage where it is important that we should know just what the law of our constitution is in regard to some im-

portant particulars, and wherein it might be changed to meet existing conditions. We have no method of amending our constitution except to go to the Colonial Secretary and try to interest a gentleman who perhaps has not read our constitution, and would not understand its difficulties if he did, and see if we can get it amended through that source. Eight millions of people, full grown, self-respecting people, have no method of amending their own constitution, under which all the business of the country is transacted. I have no hesitancy in expressing my opinion in this connection. I consider that it is an absurdity, and the Canadian people will have to find some method whereby they themselves will be able to amend their constitution as they may see fit.

There are some other things that will require consideration. We still send our lawsuits to the capital of the Empire. Picking up a Toronto paper the other day I saw that the Lords of the Privy Council had been endeavoring to decide what was the liability of a certain company in connection with the repair of a road in the County of York. It seems to me that eight millions of people, with such a bar as we have, a bar justly known throughout the world for its ability, and still more justly known for its integrity, should have no difficulty in finding judges capable of settling our own local lawsuits. We are told that this method of procedure binds us to the Empire. As if anything could bind us against our will! Do you think we are sending troops over because we also send our lawsuits? Such a thing does not influence anybody. We send troops for a very different reason. That is another question we shall have to settle, and there is another phase of it. I think probably there are gentlemen listening to me now who are saying—"Yes, but that appeal to the Privy Council is a pretty good thing. In this land where we have established what is practically a single chamber Government, where the legislature has unlimited power in regard to rights that are bound into the fabric of our financial lives, an appeal to the Privy Council is a very wise thing." I agree, that while our legislature has full power to interfere with the vested and property rights of citizens such an appeal is wise; but just south of the line they have a constitutional limitation upon the powers of the legislature. Now that is a question which goes to the heart of the affairs of a

1915
S573

country, a question which we have been too apt to discuss behind closed doors and with bated breath; but I appeal to the brainy and capable men of Canada to come out into the open and discuss the questions of importance which confront us upon their merits, and let us get at the real and true solution of them.

We shall have a good many other question to settle when the war is over. May I make an observation, Mr. President, in regard to the financial administration of the greater portion of the Dominion of Canada? I do not refer to Quebec or the Maritime Provinces, as I am not very familiar with conditions there; but as regards the Dominion as a whole, Ontario and all the Western Provinces, without respect to whether the Government be Liberal or Conservative, I say that for the last six or seven years there has been absolutely no effective criticism of the public expenditure of Canada. If you will look through the official records you will find that in almost every case where the opposition or a member of the opposition has objected to the attitude of a Minister, it has not been because he was spending too much, but because he was spending too little money. That has been the kind of criticism and the kind of check there has been upon the financial administration of Canada. Then you know that we have had during the last few years a corporation law which has permitted anybody to issue any amount of stock, bonds, etc., without any check whatever, and we have had this very liberal public expenditure and we have had these very liberal facilities for borrowing money, so we have brought about what has now come upon us—a financial crisis. This crisis has not come about on account of the war. It would have come whether the war had come or not The war has furnished an excuse. It is not the reason.

At the present time the Dominion is embarking on a propaganda which is called "Patriotism and Production." Probably Sir George Foster will make some reference to it when he addresses you in a few days. It has emanated, however, from the Department of Agriculture, under the direction of my old friend Dr. James. "Patriotism and Production" says that the time has come, now that we have spent all the money we could borrow, used up all the bonds and stocks we could float, for the farmers to get to work and pay the interest on these stocks

and bonds. Now this is a perfectly sound principle, it is in some ways the only principle. True, it looks a little absurd on the face of it; but I tell you that if the farmers have to go to work and pay the interest on these stocks and bonds, then the financial community has got to do something for the farmer. The farmer turns and says: "If we are not to sell our produce, our pigs, our cattle, and so forth, but keep them over the winter so as to get a better price in the spring, it takes capital—we must have money. The banks of Canada are not giving us the banking accommodation which we require." Now the banks come along and say in reply: "We are doing very well by the farmer—we are doing as well as we can. We have loaned so much money, and made pretty extensive losses in connection with the farming community. We can do no more." Strange as it may appear, paradoxical as it may sound, both are right. It is perfectly true that the banks have done just as well as they could be expected to do, but it is also perfectly true that the farmers are not getting the accommodation they require. The reason is that the banks of Canada are not capitalized, staffed, or equipped for the purpose of doing that kind of business—agricultural business. They are staffed and equipped for the purpose of doing commercial business in the towns and cities. They have not the staff or the equipment to deal with the agricultural business. But it must be dealt with. If you expect that the farmers are going to stand by this propaganda and do that which you ask of them you must realize that they cannot do it without means. This is a question which must be solved, and it must be solved with reference to the local circumstances. It is one of the things which the financial community of Canada will have to do if they expect the farmers to pay the interest on these securities.

Why do I mention these things? I have not mentioned them mainly for the purpose of expressing my own opinion. Mainly I have mentioned these important questions for the purpose of pointing a moral, and the moral is this. For some years past there has been a breaking away from the public service of Canada. When I was a little boy all the leading men of Canada were in Parliament or trying to get there. This is, however, no longer the case, For the last twenty or twenty-five years the brainy, capable, highly-developed men have not looked to

Parliament as a career. They have regarded it as a career fraught with much trouble and annoyance and little compensation. But when we come to the question of making war, when it comes to sending 100,000 of our sons to the field of battle, when we face questions like those to which I have referred, financial, national, social, which go to the root of everything that makes this country worth living in, then is it not forced upon us that the public service is the noblest service, the service for the best trained, the most able of the citizens of this country—for the leaders of the bar, for the leaders of all the professions, for the captains of industry and the university professors? It is time that the intellectual leaders got into Parliament and gave the public the benefit of their ability and insight.

In saying a few words about the war, Mr. President, what I propose to do is to just simply say what has been in my own mind, to state to you my own thoughts, to state to you this question as it has taken shape in my own mind, the mind of one single citizen of Canada. There has been a great deal of discussion on the subject, and for myself I express, unhesitatingly, sir, the greatest admiration for the ability with which this subject has been discussed by the press, the writers and speakers who have dealt with it in Canada. We have had a good deal of discussion as to Prussian militarism, the Treitschkean philosophy, the Bernhardi philosophy and similar matters, and all these discussions have added much to the light of the Canadian people on these important questions. I cannot add anything to that phase of the discussion that would be of value; but to what has been said upon that subject I simply desire to add this observation, that in my judgment Prussian militarism and Treitschkean philosophy would have been wholly and entirely innocuous had there not been a great economic force behind it. Prussian militarism and Treitschke philosophy might, I think, have been talked and written about to the end of time without any effect, if the expansion of the manufactures, and the increasing population of the German Empire had not convinced the German people that the time had come for a battle for their commercial salvation.

Starting after the Franco-Prussian war the Germans proceeded, with a speed and ability never equalled so far as we know in the modern history of the world, to develop their manufactures.

They put a close restriction on emigration, so that for the last forty years her manufactures have been increasing, the output has vastly increased, increased with tremendous rapidity, and her population has been increasing with almost similar rapidity. The German people have realized for some years past that something had to happen to Germany, that she had to find an outlet for her manufactured goods, and colonies for her population, or she had to cease to develop her manufactures or lift the embargo on emigration. While this has been going on there has been developed a great, strong, aggressive, capable, middle class, and that is the class which to-day dominates the sentiment and public opinion of the German State. That was the class with which Prussian militarism had to deal, and they had simply to look back and say, "Gentlemen, the time is coming when we can no longer progress unless a worldwide expansion takes place. We point to three successful wars of conquest in the past and we ask you to join us in a fourth so that we may save the situation for Germany." That, to my mind, is the simple economic explanation of the way in which this war came about. Were it not for the fact of this great economic drive behind the German nation, the war would not be a war of peoples, it would simply be a war of Governments ending in a victory and an indemnity for one or the other. One might say that it is Prussian Militarism and Treitschkean philosophy, backed up by a mighty economic force, seeking to dominate the world. We take the Prussian military ideal as an ideal of Government and we set against it what we consider the conception of British liberty. We have on the one hand a liberty, ordered and controlled by law—laws made to protect the individual in the pursuit of life, health and happiness. That is the real conception of British liberty. I am glad to say our friends in France have now arrived at as full a conception of that liberty as we have, although we call it British liberty. On the other hand we have from our German friends an ideal of their own, which is a mysterious conception of something that they call the State. You grope in your mind, you search in German literature, you try to grasp the idea. What is this state elevated over the people, which is supposed to be the supreme thing in Government? After close study you find that the only embodiment of the State is the

mailed fist of military despotism. Military despotism is its visible and only embodiment—a despotism sometimes violent, sometimes beneficent, but always ruthless to the rights of liberty and the individual. Sir, we say, that without freedom life is not worth living. We will not adapt ourselves to this German conception of the rights of citizenship. We will not hand down to our descendants a country that was once free, with the heel of an alien military despotism planted upon it. If you say to me—"you are exaggerating when you talk, in this free land of Canada, of slavery," I point to Judge Story's famous address, made at a time when no alien enemy threatened the United States, an address which from the beginning to end was a warning to his fellow-citizens against the loss of liberty.

So then, on one side we have the idea of liberty, and on the other we have military despotism.

How have these ideas fared in the past, and what chance has Prussian militarism and Treitschke's philosophy? Is it possible at this date that the world should be overrun and that this beautiful city of Montreal, for instance, should be subjected to military despotism? Sir, I have sat in a hotel as good as this in the city of Brussels and have heard it said there, in discussion with an officer of the Belgian army—within the last few years, I have heard it said, "We are safe, no enemy can ever come here." I asked why. "Why, because our neutrality is guaranteed by all the great Powers of Europe." Surely there was no more danger then of military tyranny in Brussels than there is in the City of Montreal to-day. What has been the history of liberty? Our knowledge of the history of the world is limited. We know that this world existed in its physical form many thousands of years before we have any history of it. We do know that civilizations have risen and flourished and passed away. We are not the first and we shall probably not be the last. Let us in the short period of time of which we have any history look for a moment at this principle of liberty and see how it has fared. We will go just for one moment to that place which was the original home of liberty, to that country which is the leader to-day of the world in art, philosophy and poetry—to Greece, the home of liberty and mentor of the world, and come then to Athens, the greatest

city of Greece. Athens had at no time more than 150,000 citizens, but the name of Athens comes down through the ages, as a teacher and leader in the humanities. Athens was the first highly civilized democratic state known to history. From history we get sufficient data to know that the principle of democratic liberty was then first applied, whereby liberty was ordered and protected by law and by the constitution, and whereby the citizen took part in the Government of his country. It has been said that the Athenians did not understand constitutional liberty as we understand it, because thay had subject people and even had slaves; but then that idea of all men being absolutely equal has only come to us very lately, and I imagine that even we ourselves are not always able and willing to carry it out to its fullest extent. An instance of that was the way in which the Hindoos were treated when they landed on the coast of British Columbia, and several other occurrences which might be mentioned. No, the idea that everybody is to be admitted to citizenship is not necessary to the principle, to the broad conception of constitutional liberty. Now what happened? The Macedonians came. The Macedonian Empire lasted a couple of hundred of years and then the Romans came, then the barbarians, the Normans, Venetians and Turks. When did the Greeks regain their liberty? In 1839 B.C., two thousand years after the death of Alexander the Great, and all that time the only mention of Greece in history was when the Greeks were either butchered or sold into slavery. How long was it before liberty appeared in her true guise in a sovereign state, in a state ordered by law, where the people governed themselves, recognized by neighboring countries and exercising all the functions of Government? In Switzerland in 1500 there were some forms of constitutional liberty; in Italy, a few cities grasped the idea and then lost it; but not for two thousand years was there liberty in the sense in which we understand it. In Switzerland they had this constitutional liberty, as I have stated, but it did not spread. It was only protected by the fact that the mountains of Switzerland formed a barrier. If the Swiss had gone down into the plains they would not have lasted for three months. In the 16th Century, when Charles the Fifth attempted to force his religion on the people of the Netherlands, we had first a religious

war, then an economic and national war. How long did the war last? It lasted for forty-three years. The men who stood in the ranks when peace was declared had not been born when war was declared. That was what the Dutch did for their liberty. They won it and they established the first free state with a constitution since the fall of Athens which answers to our definition of a free sovereign state. There was no constitutional liberty in England then. We had to have a hundred years of war and conflict before constitutional government was established in England. In 1701 an Act was passed which in effect declared that there was no such thing as the divine right of Kings, and this act resulted in the King upon his throne, great as he is, being as subject to the law as the meanest of his subjects. This is the constitutional liberty that we stand for to-day. The people came from Britain and from Holland and they founded the United States, Canada, Australia, New Zealand and South Africa and they carried with them the principle of constitutional liberty and that principle has spread and has carried happiness to the world. But poor old Europe, what of it? It is built upon tyranny. It has been tyrant-ridden for centuries. Only in the last few years has poor old Europe caught a glimmer of liberty. A breath of it was carried perhaps during the French Revolution, but France has only been really free since 1870. Slowly, slowly the principle of liberty wins its way. And now what is the position? Sir, the position is that the two great States, Great Britain and France, have made a stand for constitutional liberty, fighting for their liberty against a despotic power that aims at its destruction. Is it true that there is danger here? Is it true that after constitutional liberty has been so hardly won that it may happen that this country may be overrun by a military power, as has been the case in the past history of the countries of the world? The Macedonians controlled the world for two hundred years, the Romans for centuries, would it not then be possible now for the same thing to occur? And if not, why not? I have several times within the last month or six weeks been told by different gentlemen, "There is really no danger. The world has changed. It is not possible now that the world could be overrun by a military power." Let us consider that for a minute. It is just about one hundred years

since Napoleon after getting control of France conquered Belgium, Holland, Prussia, the Rhenish Confederation, Austria, Switzerland, Italy, Spain, Portugal,—he had them all except Great Britain and Russia, and the only reason he did not get them was that he could not get at them. There is no question about that. No serious-minded historian doubts that he would have conquered them if he could have got at them. Napoleon stood on the shore at Boulogne one night and he said, "Give me seven hours of darkness, a fair wind and smooth waters and I will change the history of the world." And he would have done it. There was no military force in Great Britain at that time that could have stood before him. What did Napoleon have with which to carry on his campaign against Great Britain? He had wooden scows to take his troops across—flat bottomed boats, similar to the boats that we use as ferries. That is all Napoleon had with which to cross the seas. His men were armed with guns that might kill a man at a hundred yards but certainly not farther. He had guns which could be forged at any ordinary foundry. That is all the master of the world had at that time with which to carry on his operations. Now supposing Napoleon had had the modern battleship, the sub-marine, zeppelin, aeroplane, machine guns, naval guns that kill at 20 miles, what would have happened? Why he would have got across, and he would have captured Britain beyond the possibility of a doubt. Now put William of Germany in that position. Suppose he was standing on the shore at Boulogne with France conquered, Belgium, Holland, Switzerland, Italy and Spain conquered, would he not, do you think, be able to get across the English channel and conquer England also? No sane man could doubt it. Here is the position. That the world has changed is true, but it has changed for the worse; and the invention of modern armament has placed a frightful power in the hands of a military nation unscrupulous enough to use it. Sirs, the world has never yet realized what the invention of modern military armament means and the power it gives to an unscrupulous despot. It is no longer necessary to follow, in the conquest of a country, each little army and conquer it. All that is necessary now to conquer the greatest country is to get five or six places under control and the war is practically over.

It may take months to settle it, but the conclusion is certain. The finest army of the world would be no more effective than a band of naked savages without modern armament. Recently I read an interesting description of what happened at Antwerp. You will remember that we all expected that Antwerp was going to hold out for a long time. There were at the time 100,000 Belgian troops, brave and competent as any army that ever was in the world. They were seasoned troops. They had been fighting for three or four months constantly and therefore they knew what fighting was. They were about 100,000 strong and according to ordinary notions fairly well equipped. They were behind forts that were supposed to be the strongest in the world. They were attacked by a force of about the same number; the evidence is that the German army was just about 100,000. An eye witness says that it was the greatest army, the most wonderful army that was ever seen. The men were practically all trained athletes, absolutely perfect in everything that was included in the performance of their duties as soldiers. They were equipped as no army has ever been equipped in this world before, and they were staffed by the ablest of the German officers. There were one hundred thousand brave soldeirs behind the strongest forts in the world, attacked by an army equal in number. You will remember that a few days before the fall of Antwerp, Winston Churchill in conversation with the Burgomaster said, "There is no danger." This was just a few days before the fall. The Germans got ready, made the attack and went through the forts just as though they had not been there. It only took ten or twelve days altogether.

Now, sirs, we have heard a great deal of talk about the Monroe Doctrine, but just suppose that a force should land in the United States, a force such as this German force—they could take every place in the United States where a gun or any ammunition was manufactured and they would then be able to command the whole country, because there is no force in the United States that could stand against them. The United States army is as good as any in the world of its kind. It is not trained to fight a force such as that German army. Look at the Belgian army. See how long it stood. The German army had been prepared by years of scientific thought and

scientific consideration, prepared for exactly the work it was called upon to do.

Now, why do I mention these things? Because I want to say as strongly as I can say it that we have never realized what the position is with respect to this war. We do not realize it yet. When we look at the condition of affairs now, we see that the greater portion of the German army is fighting in Poland; yet that all the force that Great Britain and France has been able to gather has made practically no progress for months in the western line of trenches. We hear of Zeppelins and aeroplanes flying over London, three German cruisers breaking through the British lines and bombarding the coast without losing a man or a ship; although, we are thankful to say, they did not do it the second time. Now can any sane man say there is no danger?

Mr. President, there is danger—there is danger. Human liberty, the liberty of the world was never in greater danger than it is to-day, since the Spanish Armada sailed up the English Channel. What is the place of Canada in this war? I say, that it is not a question of bonds or conditions or guarantees just now. We stand in a combination of circumstances where the liberty of the world is at stake. Our place is with the armies of liberty. Are we going to say, and this I want to say to you with all the force of which I am capable, are we going to say because our 30,000 men were hurried over there to help in an emergency and because they were left in Salisbury for three of four months to undergo training, that there is no hurry, that there is nothing more for us to do but sit down and wait? Surely that is a very narrow view to take. Surely that is no view for people to take when the liberty of the world is hanging in the balance. It would have been a military blunder of the first order if an attempt had been made by France and England to have forced the German lines at a horrible expense of life and the wholesale destruction of their men, without sufficient force. England was not ready for this war—it is to her credit that she was not. But she is getting ready. She is getting ready to land her men on those German trenches in the Spring, when the ground shall have dried out and the country is fit for military operations. Then the allied armies of France and Great Britain must come to the test, must then find out

whether they can, or cannot, drive the Germans back. It is only two months before the training grounds of Great Britain will be emptied to the last man. When this time comes we know that the losses must be frightful. We know that the call will go forth for men and more men, and that, Mr. President, is the time for our men to be ready.

If we are asked why we are sending our sons to fight in this awful war, when many, many of the finest of them will never again see Canada, what I have to say in answer, Mr. Chairman is this,—all of us who have sons to go have settled this in our own minds. We all have come to our conclusion, and our conclusion is plain and unalterable.

> How can man die better, than facing fearful odds
> For the ashes of his fathers and the temples of his gods?